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Published by Sun Media Publishing Inc. • Issue No. 1 Volume 17

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■ PELHAM REVITALIZATION

Fenwick to follow Fonthill's transformation

SARAH FERGUSON
PelhamNews Staff

PELHAM — If anyone asks Mayor Dave Augustyn what is most important to any community he will reply it's the downtown core.

Augustyn said for decades town residents have wanted to improve downtown Fonthill. These improvements included removing unsightly hydro power lines and making the area more visually appealing.

see RESURGENCE | page 3



Mayor Dave Augustyn stands in downtown Fonthill, which recently underwent a revitalization project.

SARAH FERGUSON PelhamNEWS Photo

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upfront

■ PELHAM REVITALIZATION: An anniversary

Dressing up Fenwick for a 160th affair

SARAH FERGUSON
PelhamNews Staff

PELHAM — This year's revitalization of downtown Fenwick, in conjunction with the community's 160th anniversary, is a face-lift costing \$2.1 million.



It has helped people regain a sense of pride in the downtown community and driven new business into the area."

Gary Accursi

When the town's Downtown Beautification Committee was initially formed, it looked at transforming both downtown Fonthill and Fenwick at the same time, but ultimately ended up choosing to do Fonthill first.

Although the revitalization of downtown Fonthill happened over the course of several years, Ward 2 Councillor Gary Accursi, a member of the downtown committee, said the rejuvenation of Fenwick will take less time.

An essential component to the beautification will be Fenwick's flagpole, which dates back to the First World War when it was used as a gather-



Ward 2 Councillor Gary Accursi (second from the right) and members of the beautification committee will be working in early January to share the designs for the revitalization of downtown Fenwick.

ing point for the community and a receiving point to welcome returning veterans. It was once at one of Fenwick's oldest schools and it was trans-

ported to the centre of the town, Accursi said.

Accursi said the Fenwick revitalization will take much less time than was needed for

Fonthill because much of the planning work had been done when the town was working with the committee to develop a vision for the bigger down-

town centre.

"We have a vision to remain consistent with Fonthill which includes dealing with ugly hydro lines, adding street furniture and making the sidewalks friendly for pedestrians."

The councillor said the committee will review the plans for Fenwick in early January and it will involve re-engaging an urban planner as well as getting public input.

Accursi said people involved with the revitalization of Fonthill have learned a few things along the way which will make the upcoming renovation much smoother. One of the struggles with the renovation of Fonthill was that it wasn't always clear what was underneath the ground.

"We learned we have to have all of the details worked out before a shovel is put into the ground," Accursi said. There were also a few issues with parking spaces, but Accursi said most of the feedback about the updated Fonthill downtown has been positive.

"It has helped people regain a sense of pride in the downtown community and driven new business into the area," he said.

"Hopefully we will get more people walking downtown and encourage more businesses to invest in property."

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Fenwick flagpole has wartime significance

PELHAM — To some people, the flagpole in downtown Fenwick may appear to be just that — a flagpole.

But to residents in Fenwick who know its history, the flagpole is a historic piece of the community's history.

The flagpole was moved from the grounds of a public school and placed in the centre of the village in 1929. In the 1940s, there was a 'Welcome to Fenwick' sign affixed to it.

During the First World War, the flagpole was a focal point for the community. Veterans from the war met at the Pelham Continuation School and marched to the pole to celebrate the end of the war and the unveiling of the National War Memorial in Ottawa by George VI, on May 21, 1939. The Fenwick landmark is also where local veterans were welcomed home from overseas in 1946.

— Sarah Ferguson

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■ PELHAM REVITALIZATION

Making things merry

SARAH FERGUSON
PelhamNews Staff

PELHAM — As holiday shoppers scurried down Pelham St. to finish their last bits of Christmas shopping, they may have stopped to admire the hundreds of decorations on posts, in windows and elsewhere along the street.

Those decorations — the swags, the hundreds of feet of garland and bright red bows — are an effort from volunteers to make downtown Pelham a perfect vision of holiday cheer.

The inspiration to decorate downtown Pelham just in time for the holidays came from seeing a lack of decorations at a seniors residence and the desire to make the

area more merry, said Gayle Baljies-Chataway.

She one year approached Paul Ryan and asked if he wanted to help — both are lifelong residents of Pelham and want to make people smile as they stroll along the streets downtown.

"Quietly people learned what we were doing and they wanted to help," Baljies-Chataway said, adding that each year, more people help and more decorations are put out.

This year, a group of volunteers put 400 evergreen swags, 252.5 metres of garland and 350 red bows on display throughout downtown Pelham.

A bulk of the decorations go up during the last week of

November, usually within a 24-hour period and through the weeks. The volunteers go back out and add a few more directions here and there.

"We meet very, very early in the morning and like a band of elves we set up the decorations," she said.

"We do what we do for the smiles. We do it because people appreciate it." Ryan spends hours making wreaths and swags thanks to generous donations from people in the community. The volunteer usually gets his evergreens from people who have trees they want chopped down.

Ryan also constructs replicas of historic buildings that once stood in Pelham, all which are on display in

Pease Park. He said Pelham is a beautiful community but it is only able to be that way because of the people who take the initiative to improve it.

"Not enough people have respect for their cities and their towns. We decorate the town because it shows appreciation and it makes a lot of people smile." Since downtown Fonthill has been revitalized, Pelham St. has become "far more attractive" and it has changed the way residents think and feel about their community, Baljies-Chataway said.

"They did a great job," she said of volunteers. "They have created a village atmosphere."

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SARAH FERGUSON Staff Photo

Lifelong resident of Pelham and volunteer Paul Ryan creates wreaths using donated evergreen trees.

■ RESURGENCE

Beautification committee breathes new life into downtown

FROM PAGE 1

"It wasn't pretty," Augustyn said, referring to what downtown Fonthill used to look like before his improvements.

"We felt that the downtown didn't best represent the community."

Ten years ago business owners and residents approached the Town of Pelham with a vision for the downtown. The Communities in Bloom committee was formed to clean up the town and collect funds for beautification.

About four years ago, just after he was elected mayor, Augustyn called a meeting

to see what actions the community could take to improve

both downtown Fonthill and Fenwick.

The meeting was called after the Pelham Business Association sent a letter to council to discuss the state of both downtown Fonthill and downtown Fenwick, which in turn initiated a public meeting. Another reason for pushing



Augustyn

forward with updating both business areas was a survey used by Niagara Region in 2007, Augustyn said. The survey, which sampled 1,000 people across Niagara, asked one question: If you could spend or invest capital dollars in your community, what would it be?

About 50% of the people surveyed in Pelham said it was the downtown areas of Fonthill and Fenwick, Augustyn said.

The Downtown Beautification Committee was subsequently formed and set to work on plans to make improvements which would breathe new life into

Pelham's downtowns.

The committee consisted of members from the Pelham Business Association, Communities in Bloom and Pelham Historical Society.

It was decided the municipality would take Fonthill then Fenwick, because both areas would require large investments. At a cost of \$4.6 million, downtown Fonthill was considered the larger of the two projects.

About \$2.1 million has been earmarked in the town's 2013 budget to begin the revitalization process for Fenwick.

The Downtown Beautification Committee

worked with the community on design guidelines to develop the "look and feel" for the revitalizations of the downtowns.

At the same time, town councillors set aside funds as improvement incentives for property owners, available to pay for such design standards as rounded windows, colour palettes, making sidewalks pedestrian friendly, using natural materials.

The federal and provincial governments each also approved up to \$850,000 in stimulus funding. Niagara Region provided \$100,000 for streetscaping.

The mayor said there are

still a few tweaks to be made "here and there," but downtown Fonthill is finished — the inaugural Pelham Summerfest celebrated its completion in 2011.

Augustyn said the project was both a private and public effort. Without the co-operation of local business owners, input from the community and federal and provincial funding, the fresh new look in downtown Fonthill would not have been possible.

"The sense of place is so important and that's what the downtown area provides to a community."

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Penam NEWS

Published by Pelham NEWS

Sun Media Corp.

228 East Main St., Weymouth, ON L0S 1E0
Tel: 905-732-2414 ext. 246 Fax: 905-732-3660

e-mail: pelham.news@sunmedia.ca

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Government missing in action

The lights are off — and there's no one home. Queen's Park is dark this week.

Only a skeleton staff and the Legislature's famous ghosts are haunting the hallowed halls.

Since October, when Premier Dalton McGuinty quit and shut down the House, our MPPs have been simply going through the motions.

We have no effective government.

Our premier is a lame duck. So is Finance Minister Dwight Duncan. For all we know, Laurel Broten will not be education minister after the Liberal leadership vote, January 26.

Is it any wonder the teacher unions are spinning their wheels on making any kind of a deal with this government?

It was pure hypocrisy for Dalton McGuinty to suggest he was calming the waters by propping up Parliament.

It was a cynical ploy to shut down debate on the controversial contempt motion over the estimated \$1 billion it cost to move two power plants. One closure was announced in the middle of the last election.

As he scots out the door, McGuinty is attempting to take with him all the anger about and the myriad of other Liberal scandals, leaving the new leader with a fresh page.

His promise that this would give the government the opportunity to sit down calmly with labour leaders to negotiate a wage freeze was nonsense.

Why would the teacher unions negotiate with a lame duck government when they can simply wait them out and deal with the new premier?

This is no way to run a province. We need our legislators back at work and earning their fair salaries.

It's not just that there's chaos in our schools, as school children are used as political pawns in a labour dispute.

The economy is still too fragile for us to have absentee landlords running the province.

There are very real fears credit rating agencies could give us another kick in our collective backside.

That would push up the cost of borrowing on our massive debt even higher.

Just when we need leadership, we have a government that's missing in action.

Let's get back to work, folk.

Fire up the grey matter.

Turn up your sleeves.

Roll on the lights.

Get this province working the way it once did.

■ COLUMN

Defence minister MackKay on F-35s

The following is an excerpt from an editorial piece by Minister of National Defence Peter MackKay on Dec. 17:

The Canadian Armed Forces need fighter jets to keep Canada safe and to safeguard global security. Since the early 1980s, the Royal Canadian Air Force has been flying the CF-18 from under our sovereignty, protect North American territory and contribute to international military missions. As shown in the recent NATO mission over Libya, fighter aircraft can protect innocent civilians and, as proven in Afghanistan, air superiority saves our soldiers' lives. The CF-18s were outmoded when purchased, but have served Canada well and will need to be replaced within the next decade.

In 2010, Public Works Minister Ron Ambrose, Industry Minister Tony Clement and I announced our government's intent to pursue a replacement aircraft for the aging CF-18. We said we would spend \$65 billion, including contingency, to buy 65 aircraft, plus spare parts and weapons.

Later in the process, we also advised the public of the estimated cost of aircraft maintenance over a 20-year period. These two



DEAN ALLISON
FROM THE HILL

investments — buying the planes and maintaining them — would be new expenditures. Of course, we would continue to spend on things such as pilot salaries and fuel to operate these new aircraft, just as we do with our current fleet. These operating costs are paid today and they will continue to be paid no matter what fighter aircraft Canada buys.

Some have questioned why we costed the replacement fighter program over 20 years and not longer. Simply put, past governments and leading officials have considered 20 years to be a period over which costs could be predicted with confidence. In 2001, Alan Williams, the official then in charge of procurement at National Defence, stated, "Rather than find ourselves in a position where we buy something that looks like a good deal, only to find out that the incremental long-term support costs escalate dramatically, we are saying no,

not this time. We want to know the full cost for 20 years." In 2004, when the former Liberal government announced the Maritime Helicopter Project, they signed off on a 20-year in-service support contract. Earlier this year, the secretary of Treasury Board stated, "All of the submissions to date that have been presented to the Treasury Board have used a 20-year cost estimate." So, in estimating program costs over 20 years, we were following the accepted practice for major military purchases.

To date, we have not spent a single penny to acquire new fighter planes.

Earlier this year the auditor general of Canada recommended we "provide a actual complete costs incurred throughout the full life cycle of the F-35 capability." Our government agreed and we are following a seven-step plan to implement the recommendation before spending any of your tax dollars on buying fighter aircraft. On Dec. 12, we presented our National Defence plan. This time estimating costs over 42 years. Never before has a government presented estimates in such a comprehensive, transparent and long-term way. These estimates are big numbers. Forty-two years

is a long time.

The new estimates for the fighter plane replacement program are just that — estimates. KPMG, a world-class financial firm, says, "Life-cycle costing is fundamentally a forecasting activity and is therefore imprecise, uncertain and highly sensitive to many factors that may be difficult to quantify at the time when the life-cycle costing is developed." Our estimates will become more definitive as we move forward and we will report revisions to you every year.

To ensure we are getting maximum value for your tax dollars, our government also announced our intent to open up this procurement and look at all viable alternatives for a replacement aircraft. We can do so now because absolutely no taxpayer money has yet been spent on acquisition costs for a replacement. The F-35 remains one of the alternatives to replace our current fleet of aging fighter jets.

Regardless of what aircraft we end up buying, the purchase cost will be no more than \$9 billion. That is the maximum acquisition price ministers Ambrose, Clement and I announced in 2010, and that has not changed.

■ COLUMN

Wake room for good questions in our day

One of my daughters gave me a journal for Christmas. What makes it unique is that for each day of the year, there is a question to answer as your journal entry: Who are you fooling? What do you not want to talk about? Can people change? What makes a good enemy? Do you have a power? What makes you cynical? Who's your nemesis? Interesting interrogatives.

My new year's resolution is to keep this journal going. One day, one question at a time. There is hope! I can keep this pledge to myself since I've always loved good questions. I learned years ago that a question with quality has a power you won't find in the answer.

We love answers. We're practically obsessed with them to the point that it feels as if we have more answers than questions.

The late Johnny Carson's comic persona, Karnak the Magnificent, had the mystic



REV. BOB RIPLEY
IN OTHER WORDS

ability to divine answers having never heard the question. We all do, to our detriment. The old cartoon has someone holding up a blindfold. "Jesus is the answer" Behind him is someone else with their sign, "What's the question?"

I weary of those whose answers outnumber their questions. They are quick with a cliché. Christians, say, who know everything from when Christ will return to His mysterious ways in the meantime.

There are two problems here. For starters, they are lazy. They are not prepared to do the work of weighing options and measuring nuance. They are dismissive of context and unprepared to think

outside the box. The philosopher Hegel said, "To think and to think hard, is a religious duty."

The other problem is that their answers are brittle to the point of being useless. Twenty little children are gunned down in Connecticut. Why? God must have needed them. Last week after I wrote of the sadness of the slaughter of innocents, in both Bethlehem and Newtown, someone forwarded me a parody of the poem A Visit from St. Nicholas, joking at the contagious smiles of these children as they stormed heaven's gates. I am not discounting the afterlife here, but is this supposed to ease the unimaginable anguish the parents of the slain must feel somehow I pray they never read this poem in their Inbox.

Why did my lover suffer? God's will. Why are the rich secure and the poor at risk? A test. Perhaps speak of God as if they have the mind of the Eternal. How arrogant. How blasphemous.

Jesus allegedly pulled together every last ounce of strength in his dying battle and gasped, "My God, why have you abandoned me?" The person who carts answers around is someone who does not at a moment's notice, forfeits the power of the question. In my paraphrase of Jesus' beatitudes, "Blessed are those who don't know it all." Jesus may be the answer. But the questions linger and are not to be dismissed with chapter and verse.

As the poet Rainer Maria Rilke wrote, we should be patient with all that is unresolved in our heart and learn to love the questions themselves.

Who are you fooling? What do you not want to say about? What makes a good enemy? Do you have a secret? If there's no room in your day for a good question, then there's no room for you.

Rev. Bob Ripley is a retired United Church minister. bob.ripley@sympatico.ca

■ **YOUNG TALENT:** 67 children entered drawings for contest

Pelham girl's creativity graces NHS greeting card

ALLAN BENNER
PelhamNews Staff

PELHAM — A portrait of Kellie Buttner graces electronic greeting cards that were e-mailed all across the region — and province — by Niagara Health System this holiday season.

While that's an honour in itself, Buttner was particularly pleased about the talented young artist who created that masterpiece.

Her five-year-old daughter, Kasey, Kasey's picture took first place in the health system's sixth annual holiday greeting card contest, selected from 67 drawings created by the children and grandchildren of NHS staff, physicians and volunteers.

In addition to Kasey's drawing, other winners included Hunter Guillemette, the four-year-old son of Denis Guillemette, a registered nurse at Welland hospital; Jacob McLeod, 8, the son of Cindy McLeod, who works in the medical records department at St. Catharines General hospital; and Cameron Lee, 11, the son of Wendy Lee, an intensive care unit ward clerk in Welland.

Both Kasey's parents work at Niagara Falls hospital. Her father Steve Buttner is respiratory therapist, mom is a physiotherapist.

Mom explained the theme of this year's contest to Kasey — the caring spirit of the season — and Kasey got out her crayons and got to work.

It was the second time Kasey has



Supplied photo

Kasey Buttner's artwork on the NHS greeting card.

entered her artwork into the NHS greeting card competition.

"She added more detail this year," her mom said, adding Kasey spent about an hour working on the drawing.

Although Kasey said she was surprised her picture was chosen, she said she "sort of" knew it was a very special drawing.

"It's a Christmas tree with a kid sitting in a wheelchair, with Mommy pushing it," she explained.

A red-haired nurse stands on the opposite side of the well-decorated tree, and two purple angels float above beside a blue hospital sign.

Kasey, a Grade 1 student at Glynn A. Green School in Fonthill, said she enjoys drawing, and her favourite subject matter — "particularly at this time of the year — is 'Christmas trees and stuff!'"

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■ **PELHAM REVITALIZATION:** The economic side

Fonthill face-lift good for business

SARAH FERGUSON
PelhamNews Staff

PELHAM — With the improvement to Fonthill's downtown complete, business is booming in Pelham.



It's an opportunity for some businesses to operate slightly different."

Tim McAvoy

From a business perspective, said Tim McAvoy, president of the Pelham Business Association, the enhancements to downtown Fonthill downtown have made the area "more attractive for visitors."

"Whenever you spruce things up, it's always better for business." Although Fonthill and Fenwick are two distinct areas, he believes that the coming updates to Fenwick will bring positive changes.

"I think the goals and the needs are sometimes different," McAvoy said about both downtown cores.

He noted that the number of vehicles travelling Hwy. 20 are much higher in Fonthill than in downtown Fenwick. He said it is one of the busiest local highways, next to the QEW which sees about 18,000 vehicles a day.

The hope for the president of the PBA is that Fenwick's businesses get on board with the coming makeover. Fenwick's businesses are a destination because you have to drive there.

"It's an opportunity," McAvoy said of the revitalization, "for some businesses to operate slightly different."

For example, sidewalk cafes will now be permitted.

McAvoy said many municipalities have undergone transformations, including Port Colborne, which recently updated Main St. (Hwy. 3).

There's always a concern that construction will drive businesses away that will be a "short-term pain," he said.

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■ **COMMUNITY:** About 70 people gather at vigil



MATT DAY QMI Agency Niagara

Dylan Hunt, 12, from Vineland, was one of about 70 people who went to the Niagara Falls candlelight vigil at city hall in honour of the Newtown, Conn., shooting victims.

'They're not suffering alone'

MATT DAY
QMI Agency Niagara

NIAGARA FALLS — With the unrelenting of their tiny, half-frozen hands, 26 children let 26 balloons drift away into the night sky above Niagara Falls city hall.

"We wanted the balloons to go to the children in heaven," Jody Yagar-Gravelle said.

Yagar-Gravelle organized last Thursday's candlelight vigil in honour of the 20 students and six adult staff members who were gunned down at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown Conn., on Dec. 14.

About 70 people braved the frigid temperatures Thursday, including Niagara Falls Mayor Jim Diodati, MPP Kim Craitor and Rev. John James from St. Andrew's United Church, who led the gathering in prayer.

"They're not suffering alone," Diodati told the crowd. "There's nothing we can do to change what's happened, but we can let them

know they don't suffer in silence and that we share their pain."

Hanna Tassillo brought her family with her from Vineland to be a part of the vigil.

She said it's hard to imagine what the town is going through, especially through the holidays.

"I want to honour these kids and know that they're good now," she said, tears welling up in the corners of her eyes. "I just feel so bad."

Her 12-year-old son, Dylan Hunt, shared his mother's feelings.

"I hope they rest in peace. They all deserve to and didn't deserve what happened to them," he said.

Diodati said he mailed a handwritten letter to Newtown First Selectman Patricia Liordas last week offering the city's condolences.

"Even as strangers, we can perfectly relate," Diodati said.

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■ **HEALTHY HORIZONS:** Graham and Edie Pett discover where their donations go — to Honduras

Making a difference

VICTORIA GRAY
PelhamNews Staff

PELHAM — Graham and Edie Pett have donated a lot of money to charities over the years, but the couple never understood what the money was used for.

They decided to find out.

"We can all give money, but to give of yourself, of your heart and spirit — it's a whole different thing," Edie said.

The Pests went to Honduras for 13 days with Healthy Horizons for Children and Families, from Nov. 14 to Nov. 25.

The well-travelled couple who live in Fonthill have been to more than 20 different places in the United States, Europe and South America, but they wanted to see a new place and help make a difference.

When they met the founder of Healthy Horizons, Steve Malone, his passion and knowledge inspired them to take their first service trip.

"What you give comes back to you in your good vibes, hugs and kisses," Graham said. "It's a two-way street."

Most people who do a service trip abroad are struck by the poverty and conditions people live in, but the Pests knew all too well the life people lived in Honduras. They wanted to see a foundation making a real difference with people's donations.

"It was really Steve's passion and dedication that convinced us," Graham said.

"You don't take this kind of trip for no good reason," Edie added. "It's to expand your awareness of the planet we live on."

Healthy Horizons focuses on helping doctors in Honduras treat patients and it provides emergency care training, food and medical supplies through De Olivo and San Lorenzo.

Edie is a chiropractor and naturopath so working with patients in a clinic was right up her ally.

"I wanted to help them reconnect with sustainable remedies," Edie said. "It seems there, like in most countries, people have lost that connection."

She wanted to help people deal with illnesses through natural medicine. She brought



VICTORIA GRAY Staff Photo

Edie Pett, left and her husband Graham spent 14 days in Honduras helping people with medical issues, teaching children to brush their teeth and finding out what happens to the money many people give to charity.

lots of essential oils, vitamins and other natural medicines to help treat them, but she found most of the people she treated had respiratory issues which made her glad she had made inhalers with other essential oils.

In Honduras most people do not have traditional stoves and cook on an open fire inside or outside of their homes.

Edie intends to work with a local naturopath to help villagers make their own essential oils with things like oregano and lemon grass, both of which grow prolifically in the area. They could start their own small businesses because both oils are in high demand in countries like Canada.

Graham is a dentist who brought more than 500 donated toothbrushes with him. He and a few other people from Niagara who went on the

trip taught the local children how to brush their teeth and explained why it's important.

"It was hilarious. We had to do demonstrations of how to brush properly and that was just so much fun," Graham said.

The couple also visited an orphanage and day care the foundation helps fund. It houses more than 40 children a day, many of whom don't have parents or are raised by single mothers.

The group of eight Niagara residents brought toys for all of the children and they spent the day getting to know them.

The group also helped put the finishing touches on three houses built by Healthy Horizons volunteers for three families. Two of the homes were made of concrete blocks.

The third house was built on stilts which raised the house a

metre off the ground because of seasonal flooding in the area.

"People used to have to live in hammocks at the tops of their houses during the rainy season because their house was flooded," Edie said. "So using these sorts of houses has been wonderful for them."

The couple was struck by how wonderful the people were and just how accepting and appreciative they were.

"They live a hard life here, but they seem very happy and very thankful," Edie said.

Healthy Horizons is a partner of a local agricultural company, Agrolibano, that employs about 5,000 locals and runs many of the programs.

The Pests plan to return annually to continue helping.

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■ **ROMA:** Falls teen, family in awe of community support

"I've got more of my strength back"

RAY SPITERI

QMI Agency Niagara

NIAGARA-ON-THE-LAKE
— Slowly but surely Nick Roma is getting his independence back.

"This is a universal cuff. Right now it has a stylus on it so I can use my phone and also put forks and knives and maybe a back scratcher ... a pen so I can sign stuff, a toothbrush," the Niagara Falls teen says from his mother's home in Niagara-on-the-Lake. "They've made me a wash mitt so I can just put it on my stump and I can wash myself in the morning."

Roma is the epitome of calm. Amazing, considering the 18-year-old has no hands and feet, the culmination of a year of medical struggles.

Last December, Roma was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukemia. In July, as he was undergoing cancer treatment, he contracted an infection that caused multiple organ failures.

On life support, Roma's blood pressure plummeted. He was not receiving blood to his hands and feet, it had to be resuscitated three times.

The infection caused a blood clot in his leg, lung, heart and brain. He had a stroke. His hands and feet turned black.

Despite the best efforts of medical staff at McMaster Children's Hospital in Hamilton, both of Roma's hands and feet had to be amputated.

Roma also had to be transferred to Hamilton General Hospital for life-saving surgery to prevent an aneurysm from rupturing in his brain. He was sent as an inpatient at a regional rehabilitation centre attached to Hamilton General. He's there five days a week and is home for the weekends.

Every Monday, he receives chemotherapy at McMaster, which is expected to continue until January 14.

While rehab, Roma sees physiotherapists and occupational therapists.

"They're helping me get back to being the way I was before, independent, doing my own stuff," he says. "I've got more of my strength back."



RAY SPITERI QMI Agency Niagara

Niagara Falls teen Nick Roma shows one of the devices he uses to be more independent while at home. The 18-year-old has his hands and feet amputated, a result of severe septic shock while he was undergoing treatment for cancer.

He's also learning to walk again using training legs that are moulded to fit him.

"I call them my training wheels. They are the legs that I first learned how to walk on and I'll have them for about a year until I get my actual prosthetics. At first it was weird and a little bit painful, but I think my legs are getting used to them."

Roma's mother, Karen, says specialists are waiting for her son's legs to completely heal.

"It takes a year for the swelling to go down, believe it or not," she says.

QMI Agency Niagara first spoke with Roma and his family in October. At the time, the Saint Paul high school grad was three weeks removed from brain surgery.

From the intensive care unit at McMaster, he said his recovery was being aided by the strong support he was receiving from family and friends.

A Facebook page, Stay Strong Nick Roma, was created to provide regular updates on how the teen was doing and to direct visitors to fundraisers to help the family cope with any financial difficulties associated with his recovery.

But neither Roma nor his family anticipated the outpouring of support they would receive from people they didn't know following the Oct. 13 story.

"I knew that the first newspaper article would get some people's attention, but I didn't think it would be this big. My Facebook page has over 7,000 likes," says Roma, who played bass in a band called Dead Lines.

"As an administrator, I can see how many people go on the page ... one week it was like 90,000 people," adds Karen.

Several schools, organizations and businesses have

stepped forward to hold fundraisers, with either some or all of the proceeds going towards helping the family pay for medical costs, such as the prosthetic legs, Roma will soon need.

For example, the Spicy Olive Bar and Grille on Centre St. closed for dinner on Dec. 20 so it could host a night of music with cover charge proceeds going to the Roma foundation.

"It's really heartwarming to see the support that he's getting from the community," says Karen. "It's not just one type of business or one age group of people. It seems like young kids in schools are doing things, elderly people are helping out, every kind of business is helping him out."

Roma is even a finalist for the Avira Community Fund, a contest offering \$1 million in donations to the country's top community initiatives. Public voting is com-

plete. Judging is now taking place, with the winners to be announced Jan. 29.

"He came in first in his category for votes and he came in second (for all the categories)," says Karen.

She says it really became evident the impact Roma's story had on others when she heard from one woman who had just been diagnosed with a serious medical condition.

"She was feeling very depressed because she was just diagnosed with something and she wanted to actually end her life. But seeing Nick's story and seeing his smile every day, now she's enjoying her life and looking at things differently," says Karen.

"He has helped people, I think, just realize that life isn't that bad. If Nick can smile with what he's gone through, if Nick can keep going the way he is, then other people (can, too)."

When Roma is home, his younger brother Jamie provides the muscle to help him move around the house. The 16-year-old says he's surprised by how quickly his brother has bounced back, which has given Jamie a more positive outlook on life.

Roma's girlfriend, Kara

Brown, says she can't put into words what it has been like watching her boyfriend recover from such adversity.

"No one really knew what was going to be the outcome, but he's here today and he's doing pretty good."

ray.spiteri@sunmedia.ca
Twitter: @RaySpiteri

SOME UPCOMING NICK ROMA FUNDRAISERS

Jan. 18: Trivia Night for Nick Roma at Optimist Club, \$20 a person. For tickets, call 905-931-9313 or e-mail maria.romano@cogeco.ca

Feb. 9: Saint Paul student council concert at Niagara Centre for the Arts, Avenue Inn, Mrs. Johnston scheduled to open. Main act will be Young Empires. Tickets, \$20, on sale Jan. 14. Call 905-356-4333.

Visit 'Stay Strong Nick Roma' Facebook page for more information.

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Grimsby and Pelham players vie for the puck along the boards.

BERND FRANKÉ Staff Photo

■ MINOR HOCKEY: 40-team tourney wraps up Saturday

Nine hometown hopefuls going for gold at Silver Stick

BERND FRANKÉ
Pelham/NEWS Staff

PELHAM — Don't let the name fool you, the Niagara Silver Stick Regional Hockey Tournament is all about going for gold — and going on.

In addition to getting their first opportunity to work off Christmas dinner, and try out any new equipment Santa may have left under the tree, 40 teams from as far as London, Ont., hit the ice at five arenas last Thursday with hopes of qualifying for next month's Silver Stick international championships. Winners of the novice division at the three-day tournament hosted by the Pelham Minor Hockey Association advance to the finals in St. Clair Shores, Mich., and midjet champions go on to play Sarnia with the bantam and peewee winners representing the region at the Silver Stick finals in Port Huron, Mich.

With 11 teams from south Niagara, including five from Pelham, there's a good chance at least one of last Saturday's gold medal games at Pelham Arena will feature a hometown hopeful.

This is the 28th straight year Pelham has hosted the Christmas break tournament and, as has been the case in the past, there will be two pools of four teams competing in each of the five divisions.

However, the bantam and peewee categories could easily have boasted twice as many teams had popularity, not ice time, been the top priority for Alison Danko, the tournament's director and the Niagara Silver Stick's organizer for the past six or seven years.

"If the twin pad in Port Colborne would have been ready, I would have had those teams in, too," Danko said.

Despite the economy that has kept some teams close to home it has resulted in the cancellation of some tournaments, the Silver Stick continues

to hold its own as a must-play event on the minor hockey calendar in southern Ontario. This year the 40-team lineup was already filled in July, and there was a waiting list after registration closed.

"That's the earliest ever for this tournament," said Danko, a one-time hockey mom who continues to serve the Pelham Minor Hockey Association as the organization's treasurer.

"There are not as many tournaments as there used to be, but I'd like to think we run a great event."

Before the teams took the ice for the first of three guaranteed games in pool play, a team headed by Danko was busy working behind the scenes to line up sponsors, recruit volunteers and get the most precious commodity in minor hockey these days — ice time.

"Getting ice always hard to get, but we get great co-operation from the neighbouring communities," she said in pointing out that Welland's two arenas and Wainfleet Arena are also hosting games in this week's Silver Stick qualifier.

Bill and Stephanie McWilliams, owners of the Tim Hortons in Fonthill, are the main tournament sponsors and supplied the trophies, banners and medals.

"They are great corporate citizens. They couldn't do enough to help out."

In all there are 19 Niagara teams competing in the tournament. Port Colborne has entries in the bantam, novice and peewee divisions, Welland has teams in midjet and novice and Wainfleet is represented by an atom team.

The full tournament schedule, complete with updated results from each game, is available online at

http://pelhamreg.stats.pointstreak.com/players-leagues-schedule.html?ea_guid=1061&seasonid=9387.

bernd.franke@sunmedia.ca



A Grimsby defender is outnumbered by Pelham Panthers forwards Adam Belovari, from left, Carson Stolk and Damien Pullar in preliminary-round action on Thursday's opening day of the 28th annual Niagara Silver Stick Regional Hockey Tournament. Grimsby went on to win the game played at the youth arena in Welland by a 3-1 margin.



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■ **WEST LINCOLN:** Rider collided with oncoming van on Victoria Ave.

Snowmobiler dies in collision

DM DAKIN
QMI Agency Niagara

Only hours into the first snowstorm of the year, Niagara had its first snowmobile fatality of the season.

A 24-year-old West Lincoln man died last Wednesday night after a collision between the snowmobile he was riding and a van.

Niagara Regional Police, Niagara EMS and the Pelham fire department were called to the intersection of Tice

Rd. and Victoria Ave. just after 9 p.m. last week.

In a press release, the NRP's traffic reconstruction unit said the snowmobile was travelling south on Victoria Ave. At the same time, a 67-year-old West Lincoln man was driving north on the same road in a 2002 Dodge van.

The two vehicles collided near Tice Rd., ejecting the 24-year-old from the snowmobile.

Motorists in the area tried to revive the man, but he died at the scene.

The driver of the van was not injured,

police said.

"The collision is still under investigation by our traffic reconstruction unit," said NRP Const. Derek Watson. "What I can tell you is that this is a very tragic event."

Watson said no charges against the driver are anticipated. Any witnesses are asked to call 905-688-4111, extension 5500.

Norine Vidal, who lives in a house at the intersection where the collision happened, said the area is popular with snowmobile riders.

"The guys often go snowmobiling on our property," she said.

Part of the problem in Niagara is there's no organized snowmobile trail network similar to what's available further north, said the manager of a local snowmobile dealership.

"Most of our customers head north because there are no OFSC trails here," said Butch Roy, a manager at Bieda's Powersports in Pelham.

The Ontario Federation of Snowmobile Clubs oversees the use of the winter shop machines in Ontario

and issues permits for riders.

The organization was in Niagara less than a week ago to run a snowmobile safety course at Bieda's.

"For the most part in the training course they stipulate riding on trails only and you're typically not even supposed to ride the road," Roy said.

Riding snowmobiles on public roads is illegal, though crossing them perpendicular to the flow of traffic is allowed to get from one path to another.

dan.dakin@surmedia.ca

■ **ROADS:** O'Reilly's Rd. upgrade

CP pays for roadwork related to turbine parts shipments

DAVE JOHNSON
PelhamNEWS Staff

WAINFLEET — Intersection improvements carried out O'Reilly's Rd. and Regional Rd. 27 didn't cost the taxpayers of Wainfleet, or Niagara, township council heard Tuesday night.

Greg Wuisman, Wainfleet's departing director of operations, told council that road work was carried out by CP Rail on the company's dime, and that it exceeds standards for road work.

Ald. Richard Dykstra raised the issue and said wanted to know if the township, or region, had paid for the work. He said a resident had asked him about some large cranes at the CP Rail yard at the south end of O'Reilly's Rd. and transport trucks carrying wind turbine parts to the generating yard.

Wuisman said CP Rail approached the township earlier in the year to let it know large wind turbine parts would be coming into the yard and loaded on trains bound for locations outside Wainfleet.

"There was a problem with the turning radius for trucks at the corner ... it is a tight corner," said Wuisman.

The rail company made the road improvements and paved it to specifications higher than what the township requires.

"They improved it for our use"

Dykstra also had a question about a sign stating the area was private property and there was no trespassing. He added the sign had since disappeared after it was reported to him.

Wuisman was not aware of any sign and said the road was open to anyone up until a gate at the southern end. Anything beyond that gate was CP Rail property, he said.



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Home, Elgin St., Port Colborne, from 6 p.m. to 7:30 p.m.

E-READERS EXPLAINED
Learn how to easily download free e-books from the library's Overdrive program at the Pelham Public Library Fonthill branch. Bring your e-reader and all your cords with you. Limited number of laptops available on-site. Register ahead as space is limited. For more information call 905-892-6443.

WEDNESDAY
JANUARY 9
FREE YOGA

Kick off the new year with free yoga classes, 10 sessions at Holy Trinity Church, 119 Division St., Welland. From 7 p.m. to 8 p.m. To register contact Marlaann Zorge at the Welland Heritage Council, 905-732-5337, e-mail mzorge@welland-heritagecouncil.com. Mats provided to all. Space is limited.

ited.
SUNDAY
JANUARY 13
MINOR BASEBALL TRAINING

The Pelham Minor Baseball Association is inviting rookie ball, mosquito and peewee players to join indoor baseball training sessions at the Niagara Sport and Social facility on the corner of Rice and Quaker Rds. There will be six sessions available, 90 minutes each from January to April. The cost is \$60 per person. E-mail playball@pmba.ca for more information.

**TUESDAY
JANUARY 15**
LEARN ABOUT DEMENTIA
Understand the different types of dementia, its causes and how to cope with it on a day-to-day basis with an information session presented by the Alzheimer's Society at the Pelham Public Library Fonthill

branch, 6 p.m. Admission is free but register ahead. For more information call 905-892-6443.

ONGOING
LISTINGS

CHESS CLUB
meets Thursdays at Welland Tennis Club, 45 Hooker St., 7 p.m. to 11 p.m. Everyone welcome. More info, call 905-734-6533.

WELLAND FRIENDLY CLUB
seniors bingo, every Wednesday at 1 p.m. at Wesley United Church, 244 First Ave. N. Everyone welcome.

WESLEY UNITED CHURCH
Presents the Acciaccatura Concert Series – the concerts with grace. Featuring The Niagara Men's Chorus Dec. 2, The Jimmy Stahl Big Band March 3, and The Torchmen May 5. All concerts are Sundays at 2 p.m. at the church. Tickets are \$50 for the series or \$20



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"Selling Throughout Niagara"

for individual concerts. Tickets are available at Wesley United Church, 244 First Ave. N., Lonny Schmidt at 905-380-1954. For more information visit: www.wesleyunitedchurch.org.

WELLAND HOSPITAL
Auxiliary gift shop Christmas hours: Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 8:30 p.m., Saturday 1 p.m. to p.m. Sunday 1 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. effective Dec. 23. Discounts available on some purchases.

WELLAND RIVER KEEPERS
meets the third Tuesday of

every month at the Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority office, 250 Thorold Rd. W., Welland, third floor, 7 p.m. More info, 905-735-9861.

DROP-IN BRIDGE
alternate Wednesdays at Pelham library, 3 p.m. Come alone or with a friend. Refreshments.

ADULT BOOK CLUBS
Long-awaited space in Pelham library's book clubs is now available. Call for times and dates. Please register ahead; \$5 includes book and refreshments.

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